

Determinants of volunteers' motives

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Abstract

Background and aims: Volunteering is recognized as socially and personally useful, but volunteers can have different reasons to engage in volunteering. Clary and Snyder (1999) listed six motives for volunteering: values, understanding, enhancement, career, social, and protective motive. The goal of this research was to examine (1) the frequency of each motive, (2) the difference in motive representation depending on the regularity of volunteering and the type of organization the participants volunteer in, and (3) whether the characteristics of volunteers or their volunteering would predict different types of motives.

Method: A sample of 147 young people (119 women) with volunteering experience, mostly students working in religious and civic organizations, filled in questionnaires on volunteer motives, self-esteem, and sociodemographic data.

Results: The most frequent motives were the values and understanding, and the least frequent was the protective motive. A statistically significant difference was shown between motives by the type of organization and the regularity of volunteering. The social motive was more common among vol-

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unteers in religious than in civic organizations. Those who volunteer in civic organizations were more often motivated by career or understanding. Those who volunteer on a regular basis tended to be motivated by the value and understanding more often than those who volunteer occasionally. Self-esteem was found to be a significant positive predictor of the value motive, and religiosity of the social motive. A tendency to invest more effort in volunteer work predicted the value motive, and the type of organization was found to be a negative predictor of the career and understanding motive. Also, the regularity of volunteering was a positive predictor of the understanding motive.

Conclusion: These findings allow a better understanding of the characteristics of volunteering and could improve the ways to promote volunteering, educate volunteers, and assign them the right volunteer tasks.

Keywords: volunteering, motives for volunteering, volunteers' characteristics, volunteering characteristics, youth

Introduction

Nowadays, there is a lot more talk about volunteering, probably because it is more common than it used to be. Volunteering is often considered one of the key components of a developed civil society (Pološki Vokić, Marić & Horvat, 2013), recognized as a civic virtue that is improving the community, helping to develop solidarity, developing the individual and common potential, as well as making a change in the world (Ledić, 2007).

Volunteering is defined as freely giving one's time to improve the lives of others, giving them new content and values without expecting any material gain in return (Wilson, 2000; according to Pološki Vokić et al., 2013). A lot of research has been done on the motives behind volunteer work (Miljković & Jurčec, 2015; Miljković & Rijavec, 2009; Pološki Vokić et al., 2013). Clary and Snyder (1999) note that one's wishing and enduring to help others depends on fulfilling their own needs by doing so. They propose a functional model that explains the motivation for engaging in volunteering by wanting to satisfy many different personal psychological motives. The motivation can change at times because volunteers change or their goals match their respective volunteer experience in a different way.

Clary and Snyder (1999) list six different functions of volunteering that represent motives for volunteer work. The first is the value function, which explains engaging in volunteering so as to act out of one's important values, such as humanitarianism and helping others. The second is the understanding function, in which someone learns and develops skills through volunteering. The third is the enhancement function, meaning that volunteers can develop and grow psychologically through this experience. The fourth is the social function, which allows volunteers to meet new people, strengthen one's relation-

ships, and adjust to the social surroundings. The fifth is the career function, which describes enrolling in volunteering activities in order to gain as many career-related experiences as they can. The last one is the protective function, in which an individual uses volunteer work to reduce guilt or to address personal problems. These motives can be divided into intrinsic and extrinsic motives. The intrinsic motives are the value, enhancement, and understanding, whereas the extrinsic are the motives for career and the social motive. The protective motive can be both intrinsic and extrinsic. Miljković and Jurčec's (2015) research shows that most volunteers see the intrinsic motives as more important than the extrinsic. Of course, someone can be motivated by more than one motive or need, and the motives can change with time, age, and the type of activities they volunteer in.

A research on volunteering (Lammers, 1991; Pološki Vokić et al., 2013) found differences between gender and age groups for both enrolling and commitment to volunteering activities. They also found differences arising from the specific characteristics of an individual such as religiosity and fields of study, where value-oriented volunteers were associated more with students engaged in human sciences and jobs that include higher levels of communication skills. Most volunteers are usually younger and female. Lammers (1991) even proposes a typical volunteer profile of a highly educated woman who considers volunteering her obligation. Most volunteers identify with intrinsic motives in their volunteer work (Juzbašić & Vukasović Hlupić, 2015; Miljković & Jurčec, 2015; Pološki Vokić et al., 2013) and that can indicate an altruistic view on volunteering.

By examining the predictors for these motives, it is found that the intrinsic motives of value, understanding, and enhancement can be predicted by religiosity. A person who thinks of himself/herself as a religious person, and is more involved in the religious community, is more frequently encouraged to help others (Pološki Vokić et al., 2013). Also, a higher self-esteem predicted a helping behavior and care for the well-being of others connected to these motives. On the other hand, the well-being of a person, including their self-esteem, grows with engaging in volunteer activities (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). The motives for career and social motives are more common for male volunteers. A significant predictor for these extrinsic motives is the field of study (Pološki Vokić et al., 2013), but until now, research has included only few different predictors for the disciplines of social sciences (such as education and economy) and formal sciences (such as computer science).

The goal of our research was to examine the motives underlying volunteer participation and specific characteristics of volunteers and their volunteering. We wanted to examine the frequency of the specific motives, the difference in

motive representation depending on the type of organization they volunteer in, and the regularity of volunteering. Also, we wanted to see if individual characteristics of a volunteer (religiosity and self-esteem) or their volunteering (the regularity of volunteering, the type of organization, effort, and satisfaction) could predict their motives for volunteering. Based on the literature reviewed, it was expected that the volunteers would mostly identify with the intrinsic motives, such as values, understanding, and enhancement. Due to the mixed results in the literature, we could not predict the differences in motive representation between volunteers in religious and civic organizations and between those who volunteer regularly and irregularly. Finally, it could not be estimated whether individual characteristics of a volunteer or his/her volunteering would predict the motives for volunteering.

Method

Participants

A total of 147 participants were involved after contacting several volunteer organizations. The participants were young people who are a part of a volunteer organization. The sample comprised 66.7% students, 25.2% young workers, and 8.2% were unemployed. Eighty-one percent of the participants were female. The average volunteering length was 38.5 months ($SD = 29.37$, range 0–120) and 65% of the respondents were regular volunteers who volunteer at least once a month. There were 53.7% of the participants who volunteer in religious and 46.3% in civic organizations.

Instruments

Volunteers Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998; Croatian adaptation by Miljković & Rijavec (2009) was used to measure the motives for volunteering. It has 30 statements, five for each of the six functions (value, understanding, enhancement, career, social, and protective). The participants were asked to indicate the importance of each reason for volunteering on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*I strongly disagree*) to 7 (*I strongly agree*). The score for every motive was obtained by summing up the answers for every motive, with a range from 5 to 35. Reliability for the value function motive is Cronbach's $\alpha = .68$, the understanding function motive $\alpha = .82$, the enhancement function motive $\alpha = .74$, the social function motive $\alpha = .81$, the career function motive $\alpha = .86$, and the protective function motive $\alpha = .76$.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1965; Croatian adaptation by Lacković-Grgin, 1994) has 10 items, five measuring positive and

five negative feelings about oneself. All items are answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*I strongly disagree*) to 4 (*I strongly agree*). Five items should be reversed and a global measure of self-worth is formed by summing the items. A higher result indicates a higher self-worth assessment. Cronbach's α in the research with Croatian students was between .74 and .89. In this study, the α was .86.

The questionnaire contained sociodemographic data of the participants including gender, working status, and the field of study. The participants were asked to self-assess their religiousness from 0 (*I don't consider myself religious*) to 10 (*I consider myself very much religious*). Furthermore, there were questions about their volunteer work: the regularity of volunteering (where *regular* is at least once a month and *irregular* is less frequent than once a month), the length of volunteering in months, the type of organization (religious or civil), the effort they put in volunteering (from 1 = *I don't invest effort* to 7 = *I invest a lot of effort*), and the satisfaction they receive from volunteering (from 1 = *I am not at all satisfied* to 7 = *I am extremely satisfied*).

Procedures

The participants had been recruited by their volunteer organization leaders and university volunteers. We contacted various volunteering organizations working in the Zagreb area with a request to share the link to our online questionnaire with their volunteers. With the snowball sampling method, the online questionnaire was shared with other volunteers. The inclusion criterion was at least one volunteering activity during the last year. Volunteer work was defined according to the Croatian Law on Volunteering (2013, p. 1) as an "investment of personal time, effort, knowledge, and skills out of free will with which services and activities are executed for the well-being of another person or wider public, and are executed by persons in a way anticipated by this Law, without existence of any conditions of providing a financial reward or seeking any other material benefit for volunteering accomplished". A formal volunteering contract was not a prerequisite for volunteer experience. The ethical permission was obtained by the Ethics Committee of the Catholic University of Croatia. Before filling in the questionnaire, the participants were asked to read the informed consent form. By clicking on the "Next" button, they confirmed that they agreed to the terms and entered the questionnaire.

Results

The first problem was to examine the frequency of a particular motive for volunteering. In this research, the most frequent motive was the value function

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the motives for volunteering, religiosity, self-esteem, the effort invested in volunteering and satisfaction with volunteering

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max
Value function motive	29.28	4.13	15	35
Understanding function motive	28.75	4.67	11	35
Enhancement function motive	23.22	5.66	7	34
Social function motive	18.68	6.13	5	31
Career function motive	23.31	6.98	5	35
Protective function motive	17.86	6.14	5	34
Self-esteem	22.19	3.70	14	40
Religiosity	8.65	2.00	0	10
The effort invested in volunteering	5.50	1.13	2	7
Satisfaction with volunteering	5.34	1.21	2	7

($M = 29.28$, $SD = 4.13$), and the least frequent was the protective function ($M = 17.86$, $SD = 6.14$). The representation of other motives and other variables used in the analysis is shown in Table 1.

To explore the difference in the representation of a particular motive by the type of organization, we used a t-test. A statistically significant difference is shown in the understanding function motive, $t(145) = 2.72$, $p < .01$, the career function motive $t(145) = 4.03$, $p < .01$, and in the social function motive, $t(145) = -2.42$, $p < .05$. The career function motive is more represented in participants of non-religious organizations ($M = 25.69$, $SD = 6.23$) than in those in religious organizations ($M = 21.27$, $SD = 6.98$). Also, volunteers in non-religious organizations ($M = 29.85$, $SD = 4.12$) have more of the understanding function motive than those in religious organizations ($M = 27.79$, $SD = 4.94$). Those in religious organizations ($M = 19.79$, $SD = 5.85$) more often have the social function motive than those in non-religious organizations ($M = 17.38$, $SD = 6.23$).

Furthermore, we wanted to explore the difference in the representation of a particular motive based on the regularity of volunteering (regular/irregular). A statistically significant difference is shown in the value function motive, $t(145) = -2.30$, $p < .05$, and the understanding function motive, $t(145) = -2.85$, $p < .01$. Those who volunteer regularly have more of the value function motive ($M = 29.84$, $SD = 3.69$) than those who volunteer irregularly ($M = 28.22$, $SD = 4.73$). Also, those who volunteer regularly have more of the understanding

function motive ($M = 29.53, SD = 5.65$) than the irregular ones ($M = 22.67, SD = 5.7$).

To explore which variables (individual characteristics or volunteering characteristics) predict particular a motive, we performed six regression analyses with each motive as the criterion variable. The model was significant for the value function motive, understanding function motive, social function motive, and career function motive (Table 2). Insignificant models were for the ones for the enhancement function motive, $R^2 = .04; F(6, 140) = 0.94, p > .05$ and the protective function motive, $R^2 = .04; F(6, 140) = 10.1, p > .05$.

From Table 2 it can be seen that the value function motive can be predicted by higher levels of self-esteem and the effort invested in volunteering. The understanding function motive can be predicted by the regularity of volunteering and the type of organization, where the participants who reported regular volunteering and were from civil organizations reported higher levels of understanding as a motive for volunteering. Of all the extrinsic motives it is the social function motive that can be predicted by lower levels of satisfaction with

Table 2. Prediction of a particular motive for volunteering by individual characteristics and characteristics of volunteering

	Value function motive		Understanding function motive		Social function motive		Career function motive	
	β	t	β	t	β	t	β	t
<i>Individual characteristics</i>								
Self-esteem	.19*	2.55	.09	1.20	-.02	-0.30	.04	0.56
Religiosity	-.01	-0.19	-.07	-0.79	.15	1.77	-.18*	-2.13
<i>Characteristics of volunteering</i>								
Regularity of volunteering ^a	.10	0.13	.16*	2.04	.08	0.93	.08	1.01
Type of organization ^b	-.13	-1.60	-.18*	-2.14	.14	1.63	-.26**	-3.06
The effort invested in volunteering	.29**	2.92	.15	1.46	.16	1.56	.09	0.92
Satisfaction with volunteering	.06	0.56	.11	1.04	-.27*	-2.57	-.07	-0.66
R^2	.20		.16		.11		.15	
F	$F(6, 140) = 5.66^{**}$		$F(6, 140) = 4.51^{**}$		$F(6, 140) = 2.88^*$		$F(6, 140) = 3.95^{**}$	

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; ^aRegularity of volunteering: 0 – irregular, 1 – regular; ^bType of organization: 0 – civil, 1 – religious.

volunteering, while the career function motive can be predicted by religiosity and the type of organization. Moreover, the volunteers who reported lower levels of religiosity and those from the civil type of volunteering organizations also reported higher levels of career motives for volunteering. These individual characteristics and the characteristics of volunteering explain 10-20% of the variance of volunteering motives.

Discussion

The goal of our research was to examine the motives underlying volunteer participation and the specific characteristics of volunteers and their volunteering among young volunteers. The results showed that the value function motives were the most common among the volunteers, while the protective function motives were the least common. Earlier research has also found the value function to be the most frequent reason to volunteer, but the understanding function motive was found to be more common among volunteers in earlier studies than in the current study (Juzbašić & Vukasović Hlupić, 2015; Pološki Vokić et al. 2013). The protective function motive, which was found to be the least frequent in our study, was earlier found to be the second least frequent motive in a study conducted by Juzbašić and Vukasović Hlupić (2015), with the social motive as the least frequent.

Furthermore, according to the results of our study, individuals volunteering in religious organizations are more likely to be driven by social motives than those who volunteer in a non-religious organization. There has been no study that examined motives for volunteering based on the type of organization, but according to Grönlund et al. (2011), religion is generally often connected to both value-based and social motivations for volunteering.

As for the regularity of volunteering, the results of the current study found that the value and understanding as motives are connected to regular volunteering. According to Lammers (1991), individuals are in part motivated to volunteer in order to gain new skills. They stay in voluntary positions while they continue to train those skills (gain understanding), which gives them intrinsic rewards in their work experience. Training a skill includes learning and could relate to the motive of understanding. Therefore, these findings are similar to those in our study, where it was found that understanding as a motive is connected to regular volunteering, that is, staying in a volunteering position. On the other hand, in another study, social motives were found to be linked to irregular volunteering (Zrinščak et al., 2012), which was not replicated in our study, in which the social motives were linked to regular volunteering.

In the current study, it was found that value-driven motivation was predicted by a higher self-esteem and making more effort while volunteering. The understanding motive was predicted by the regularity of volunteering in a way that those who volunteer on a regular basis tend to be motivated by understanding, and this is more frequent among those who volunteer in a civil organization than among those who volunteer in a religious organization. The social motives were predicted by less satisfying volunteer experiences, and finally, career driven motivation to volunteer was predicted by less religiosity. Similarly, Miljković and Jurčec (2015) found that extrinsic motives in general result in a less satisfying volunteering experience. Volunteering on a regular basis was shown to be a predictor of intrinsic motivation, more precisely, the understanding motive (Lammers, 1991). On the other hand, irregular, from time to time volunteering could be motivated by extrinsic motives (such as career).

This study had some limitations that should be addressed. The data were collected online, and the link to the questionnaire was mainly given out to the volunteers by the person who organizes their volunteering. In case they wanted to impress that person, the volunteers' answers might have been insincere or socially desirable. Furthermore, we measured the motives using only one questionnaire, with 30 items. It would be advisable to use a more thorough measure to gain a deeper insight into a volunteer's motives. Also, only a limited number of personal characteristics was included. It would be useful to measure, for example, some personality traits, such as consciousness, or to include a measure of loyalty, altruism, and so forth, in future studies. Finally, based on this data, we cannot conclude upon causality. We do not know if, for instance, regularity predicts motives or motives predict causality. Therefore, longitudinal studies are needed. In future studies, it would also be advisable to include volunteers from smaller towns and less urban areas to see if there are any differences in motivation since this study was conducted in an urban area. Also, the inclusion of less urban areas would be useful in order to examine the difficulties of engaging in a volunteer activity and the difficulties of volunteering in general, because the difficulties might be demotivating. Moreover, it would be interesting to find out how much volunteers know about the different chances offered to volunteers and how familiar they are with, for example, the Croatian Law on Volunteering (2013), because this might change their motivation to volunteer.

Despite all the limitations of the study, these findings still have valuable implications. For an individual, the study can be beneficial if it makes them think about and recognize their own motivation to volunteer, choose volunteering activities that will satisfy their specific needs and result in increasing their

well-being and life satisfaction, as well as their satisfaction with their volunteer work. The results are also valuable to the organizations that coordinate volunteers; they can be helpful when presenting and advertising volunteering activities, direct the organizations to recruit the right people considering their motives, and help them recognize the individuals that volunteer more often. Finally, these findings can be useful to the society as a whole, in order to promote volunteering, pro-social behavior, and altruism.

Conclusion

People are driven by different motives while volunteering. In this study, six different motives were listed: value, understanding, career, enhancement, social, and protective function motive, with the value as the most common, and the protective function as the least common motive for volunteering. Volunteering in a religious organization was found to be linked to social motives, while volunteering in non-religious organizations was found to be more likely driven by the career and understanding motives. Those people who volunteer because they are motivated by the values or understanding tended to volunteer regularly. Both individual characteristics and the characteristics of volunteering had a significant role for the different types of motivation for volunteering. Intrinsic motives could be predicted by higher levels of self-esteem and effort, more regular volunteering, and volunteering in civic organizations. Extrinsic motives, on the other hand, could be predicted by lower levels of satisfaction and religiosity, as well as volunteering in the civil type of organizations.

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